756 "As in all the tribes of this America, there are among our Mataguayos certain doctors or wizards, whom they call "yegu." They are feared and respected. Those who wish to enter this profession go off into the uninhabited areas for a few days, fast rigorously and run about continuously day and night. Their manner of effecting a cure is to lean their whole bodies right over the sick person, who is lying on the ground, place both hands in the form of a tube over the affected and painful parts and then blow with all their might emitting at the same time a series of hoarse bellows. They persevere in this treatment for hours on end and even all night long. By way of payment they are given anything they ask for to the point that the invalid may be left naked, but if the sick person should not recover, his relatives will insist that everything be returned. When an epidemic of some sort appears in the village or in the surrounding villages, all the yegus come together, sit down a short distance away from the group of huts and with their faces turned toward them burst forth into a melancholy song accompanied by the sound of some small gourds filled with stones which they shake at the same time. They think that this will frighten the pestilence away or prevent its entering."

"A common malady among the Mataguayos is mange, and the 164 disease which ravages them most is pleurisy. As soon as they become ill they shave their heads and call the yegu. When an invalid starts 763 to die he is taken to the place where he is to be buried and there, in 764 order to have him avoid the anguish of his last moments, he is choked to death. The body, not extended but half raised, is placed in a rather shallow hole which, after being covered with branches and grass, has earth thrown on it."

"On returning from the funeral all the equipment which be- 768 longed to the deceased is broken up; his hut is dismantled and taken to a new spot [596] or at the very least the door through which he [764] passed on being carried out to his grave is covered over. Each village has its own common burial ground which is always close at hand."

"The deceased's relatives gather around the grave on the night 765 following the burial, and perform the funeral rites with lugubrious clamorings and drumming on their pimpines. For some time they abstain from eating fish and other meats.

● 774 "They have a vague notion of the soul which they call Neuseh of which they believe that it outlives the body and transmigrates into

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[774] some animal according to its merits in this life. They also recognize
776 with the name Ohott-at (1) (great spirit) a superior being who created

1. "O'hot" = spiritness; "tat" and "taj" = augmentative (J.P.)

them, but they do not worship this being at all. They are in great fear of an evil being who, wandering about at night, harms man, for which reason they call it Onnescilele (2) (night wanderer) and commit

2. "Onne" (hunat) = night; "sci" = locative; "léle" = patronimic (J.P.)

themselves to his service in order to win his good will."

XVI

Some Observations on the Previous Chapter

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114 The notes on appendix L written by Father Alejandro M.
101 Corrado are full of material of interest for this treatise. In them he establishes that "Matacos, Mataguayos and Noctenes are one and the same thing" explaining that in Salta they are called Matacos, and in Tarija Noctenes, while the Mataguayos themselves refer to themselves as Huenneyei.

According to the good Father the name Noctenes is a corruption of Octenai, a term used by the Chiriguayos to refer to these Indians. I find myself incompetent to argue this point about the origin of the name Noctenes; but since the Tobas and Guaycurúes owe it to the Guaraníes that they are known to us by their present names it would not be at all strange that a similar thing had happened in this case also.

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101 We are given to understand by this account that not everyone
114 calls the Mataguayos Noctenes, and one can understand that this is the cause of the disappearance of the Tonocoté nation. Tonocoté was a name limited to certain tribes only, but which doubtless was extended to many others, as far as language goes, because it was the first learned

291 or netting, which reaches down to their knees or a little less. Some men of more sophisticated taste sometimes put on a sort of waistcoat, hand woven from garavata fiber and painted. Of the same material [415] and made in the same way is the bag which they are in the habit of carrying at their side, in which, when they travel, they keep their flint and steel or the fiber and wax for their arrows and other small things which they use. When at home, at least at nighttime, they wear no clothes—possibly to keep from damaging them."

622 621 "There is no use looking for chiefs or captains with any authority, for among them there are neither any who give orders nor any who obey them—they only have friendly respect for, and sometimes follow the advice of, someone among them who enjoys a certain prestige or who is very likeable. In time of war or common danger, some make limited alliances between a few huts only, for sake of unity." [602]

582 "They marry without any visible ceremony and without formalities of any sort; nor do the parents play a role in the matrimony of their children, who marry when they wish to and to whom they wish—the women always give preference to a man who is adept at fishing, and the men seek out those women who are active and diligent in their search for fruit. Once a man and a woman have come 585 591 to an understanding they go off together into the forests for a few days, doing whatever they see fit to do, and return then to the encampment where they either set up for themselves or go to live with the woman's 595 parents-in-law. Few indeed are those who have more than one wife, even though divorce, among the younger set, is frequent. Adultery 837 684 also appears to be rare; the women do not consent to others having affairs with their husbands, on the contrary, they go to their houses and insult, threaten and fight them, a thing which often proves highly amusing to the men, women and children of the same camp, all of whom come out of their abodes to see the gestures and grimaces which the two women perform for each other's benefit, laughing uproariously and applauding noisily and gleefully the name calling and cursing, blows and kicks which they meet out to each other rather disgracefully.

● 774 "It would be useless to look for religious beliefs amongst a people so miserable, not to say stupid. It seems, nevertheless, that they do have some idea of the soul, which they call neusec, but about whose 776 ultimate destiny they have no clear idea. They also have a jumbled

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI 12
Choroti SK 6

M T C 231 soon became skilled riders, but among the other Pilcomayo tribes they are rare. Before the Chaco Indian became acquainted with the white man, the dog was the only domestic animal known to him. These half-starved, fierce, and treacherous dogs are a real nuisance in the Mataco and the Choroti villages to the white traveller who has to stay among the Indians, because in their hunger they are always on the alert to rob him of edible things, among which they include not only his provisions, but also his saddlegear, boots, and other leather goods. Although the Mataco and the Choroti treat their numerous dogs badly and evidently have little use for them even as watches, yet in a way they regard them as members of the tribe. They never kill a dog, however old and wretched it may be, and when it dies they lament over it just as they lament over a fellow-tribesman. This curious practice is due to superstitious reasons, fear of the spirit of the dog. Like many other South American Indians, the natives of the Chaco believe that the souls of their dead tribesmen may reincarnate themselves in the dogs.

M C [774] M C [775]

Only the Tobas, who are culturally superior to the rest of the Pilcomayo tribes, feed their dogs properly and have real use for them both in hunting and as watchdogs. But even these dogs are of uncertain breed and by nature so savage that for my own part I failed in my attempts to train them according to European methods.

T 231

These general remarks on the material culture of the Pilcomayo tribes may suffice as a basis for the following description of their social customs and their intellectual culture. I shall repeatedly have occasion to touch upon the ergology of the Indians in describing their magical ornaments and amulets, as well as various objects used at religious ceremonies.

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2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12

M 776 821 in drought, in eclipses, etc. Thunder and lightning, for instance, are caused by the demons called *aitták tavakái pählai* (the »thunder demons»), which pass in great numbers through the air or above the clouds. Eclipses of the moon, on the other hand, are attributed to a demon called *aitták hayáh* which is supposed to prey upon the moon. The Mataco try to frighten away both the thunder-demons and the demon eclipsing the moon by shouting loudly and making a noise, and by beating drums.

M 775 774 The same may be said of the nature of the *aitták* and the *nahút* as has been said of the *möhsek* of the Choroti. It seems to me probable that they are in their origin nothing but spirits of the dead or disembodied human souls. From this point of view, I believe, Pelleschi is right when he says that the religion of the Mataco can be characterized as essentially a worship of souls. But there are disembodied souls of different kinds. The Mataco word for »soul» is *kasītah*. It is the soul that detaches itself from the body, temporarily during dreams, permanently in death. As a death-spirit the *kasītah* is generally the object of fear. Of these death-spirits some, which are particularly evil-minded, become *nahút* or personifications of mortal diseases, whereas others have become personifications of curable illnesses and lesser evils. It is a well known fact that the spirits of certain persons — especially of sorcerers and persons who have died a violent death — are greatly feared, and just such spirits are likely to turn into that particular kind of demon whom the Mataco call *nahút*. The fact that graves are regarded as the dwelling-places of these demons confirms the conclusion that the *nahút* are in their nature nothing but disembodied human souls.

M [764]

T 776 As to the *T o b a s*, I have already mentioned that they call the spirits *peyák*. Like the Mataco, the Tobas fancy that these spirits appear in the shape of small boys (*nätolik*), and in daily life, when speaking of these beings, they more often use the word *nätolik* than the word *peyák*. Although the spirits in the main have human form, they at the same time resemble birds, and more particularly ostriches. At any rate the Tobas informed me that »the *peyák* have wings, large like those of the ostrich» — an idea quite natural to a people who even identify living men with ostriches. Still they are mostly invisible to the human eye; only the medicine-men who are endowed with a special clear-sightedness can see them and enter into communication with them. The whole world swarms with these mysterious beings, who are regarded as the causes of all evils that befall man. Everything that has been stated on this

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

171 are nourished will influence them physically as well as in character, and the Indians have no desire that their children should in any way acquire the natures of such animals.[1])

262 826 774 The fear of eating the *heads* of certain animals is probably due to similar ideas. A menstruous woman, as we have seen, is forbidden to eat the head of a parrot, lest she should go mad or be changed into a tiger; and similarly a father, while he is observing the rules of the couvade, must abstain from eating the head of a cow. According to primitive belief the soul or vital power of the body is particularly concentrated in the hair and the head. That the head of a cow is especially regarded as taboo is comprehensible from the fact that animals imported by the whites are generally looked upon with superstitious fear and their flesh avoided by Indians still living in a state of nature.

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[1]) Grubb, *op. cit.* p. 137.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Chapter XVIII.

Ideas of future life and funeral ceremonies.

Although the Chaco Indians certainly do not believe in the »immortality of the soul» — an expression often abused, especially by Christian missionaries — they all believe in the continued existence of the soul after death. Their ideas about the future life are much the same as those found among most primitive peoples. Man is, as it were, a double being; in the visible body there resides an ethereal shadow-like being, mostly invisible, which is its life-essence and the particular seat of which is the chest. That the soul is thought of as being in its nature a shadow-like form appears especially from the name given it by the Tobas: *kudepakál*, which means »our (*i. e.* the human) shadow». The Choroti usually speak of »the dead one» (*yál*) whereas the Mataco call the soul *kasītah*, a word the etymology of which is obscure. When man is asleep this ethereal being is believed to have left its abode for the moment, and what he experiences in his dreams is believed to be really experienced by the soul during its wanderings. When he awakes it returns to the body. In death, on the other hand, the soul has left its abode for ever. This is the work of the evil demon who entered into the body causing disease and death.

Leaving its bodily frame at the moment of death, the soul is set free to an active and independent existence and changed into a supernatural being of whom the Indians as a rule stand in great fear. According to the ideas they have of the existence and activity of the soul after its separation from the body, the mysterious spirit at first hovers about its old abode, the dead body, and the house where the departed lived, being then particularly dangerous to the surviving relatives. The danger is greatest before the corpse has been buried. The Indians also fancy that the soul follows the body to the grave, and their burial

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

765 551 Chaco tribes. These savages as a rule are very reluctant to mention their true Indian names. Thus, as I have mentioned before, when the Chaco Indians visit the whites they nearly always assume names for use instead of their real names. If the Indians are thus careful with the names of the living, those of the dead are particularly regarded as taboo and must never be mentioned, especially by the nearest relatives. When I asked one of my Indian friends about the name of a man who had just died, he hesitated for a moment, looked round, and when he saw that no one of the relatives was near, he *whispered* the name in my ear. This superstition, I believe, is ultimately based on the idea, held by all Indians, that *the soul of a person is inherent in his name*. To know a person's name is therefore the same as to have his soul in one's power, and supernatural influences can be exerted upon him through this invisible part of his personality, just as they can be exerted through a lock of his hair or a piece of his nail. If the soul is believed to be in the name, we can easily understand why the names of the dead are especially taboo. To mention it is the same as to enter into close contact with the departed soul itself, to which the infection of death is attached, and this is supposed to entail unfortunate consequences, at least for the nearest relatives. For an outsider there is evidently not the same personal danger. But since a person may be controlled and conjured through his name, it is further believed that the rest of the dead in the grave may be disturbed by mentioning his name. It is therefore considered a dreadful indiscretion against the relatives to speak of the deceased by name. This is the idea prevailing both among the Tobas and among other Chaco tribes. Generally the Indians do not like to speak about the dead at all, and if they do, their tacit maxim is: *de mortuis nil nisi bene*. The relatives would never admit that they fear a dead parent and regard him as malicious. They always pronounce him to be »good», as if believing that by such a euphemism they may change his character or paralyse the harmful effects arising from him.

[774] [795]

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NOTES

I. The Spirits of the Dead

1) *Husek* (*o-husek* or *no-husek* = my soul) is the »god» we have inside of us when we are living. This spirit goes away when we dream. It does not reside in any particular organ but is everywhere in our body. It is through the *husek* that we know what is going to happen. When we die the *husek* becomes an *āhat*, when the *āhat* dies it becomes a bird called *xwitson*. The *xwitson* becomes an *katak* fly and the fly a *ḳipḳip* bird, the *ḳipḳip* becomes a spider (*xwistę́*) and the *xwistę́* becomes a bat (*asus*) and then disappears.

2) The love spirit is called *soitayax*. She is beautiful, all adorned with necklaces and bracelets, exactly like a woman falling in love. She is very fond of men and it is she who commands women to love. When a woman leaves her husband and goes to another man, it is because her soul has tired of the first husband. In the same way a man takes another wife, his soul craves a change.

3) Now and then the *āhat* comes back shortly after death. In such cases, he is very bad. His eyes are yellow. If an *āhat* comes back he goes directly to the house where women are alone, generally the women become frightened and run away. The *āhat* like to sleep with women. They tell them that they are going to bathe and that they will come back very clean and good-looking.[1]

4) At times the spirit comes back to visit his grave, but this only occurs a few days after death, before he has had time to go to his family house in the underworld.

5) The soul goes to the abode of the dead riding a beautiful horse, well-saddled and carrying all that is necessary for the trip. The soul also drives in a car, from one village to another and wanders everywhere. On his way to the land

[1] It is said that the *āhat* are dirty, but my informant was not of that opinion. He told me that all the *āhat* he had seen were clean and beautiful.

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The medicine-man always knows beforehand when the red grasshopper (*čol*) will come. The striped grasshopper (*talesai*) lives inside a kind of very big gourd (*wotsotáx*). The grasshoppers belong to a master who sends them everywhere. During the summer they are out but at the first cold weather, they return to their squash.

Each year in the month of August, the medicine-men have a ceremony in order to go and see the *lachiwana* bees to ask them to come down to earth once more. For this event the medicine-men snuff *hatax* powder. They go up where the mother of all bees lives. She is as large as a house. To reach her the medicine-men transform themselves into *aguara-guasu* (*Canis jubatus*). The mother of the bees requires presents since she is afraid that by burning the old prairies her children might get burned too.

If someone speaks ill of a medicine-man, the latter's familiar spirit may enter the offender's body and thus avenge the insult. The soul of the medicine-man (*táxumit*) is ferocious. When the medicine-man is at odds with someone, his *táxumit* inflicts illness on the person with whom he is angry and no one except the medicine-man is able to cure the victim. It is wise therefore to stay on good terms with medicine-men.

IV. The Sun and the Medicine-men

The medicine-men may go and visit the Sun, Moon, the Night, the Rain and the Big Fire to make friends with them. During these trips they always go in gangs led by an older man who is expert in the difficult art of overcoming the numerous obstacles they meet on the way. He is the spiritual father of the younger medicine-men. If wandering medicine-men meet those of other villages, they fight and the spirits of those wounded or killed during the trips will be sick or will die on earth, for all that happens to the spirit must inevitably happen to the body. Medicine-men never fight on earth, and only while under the influence of *hatax* do

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XIII. The Diseases

753 The diseases are demons which have the appearence of
776 men but are invisible. They wear feathers like medicine-
men. Smallpox for instance is especially ugly. His head
755 is swollen and full of small holes. He lives not for from Salta, in a cave on a big mountain. The demons of disease live under the ground or within the *yuchanes*. They leave their shelter to enter men and make them sick. In order to get them out of the bodies of sick people one must ask them what they want, for the demons always want something. One has to say, »What do you want?» The demon answers, »Food, dresses, a gun.» All these things are to be given him. But they are equally satisfied with only the sight of these things and men may very well eat the food or make use of the things whose essence the demons have received. It would be very dangerous to eat of a dish before the demon has helped himself. Men dance in order to scare a demon or chase him away. The demon is obliged to participate in the dancing and gets tired. When those who take part in a treatment have danced for a while, the magician speaks to the disease. The disease asks whether they are angry with him. The medicine-man answers, »No, we are dancing as usual.» The disease then says, »Then let us not dance any longer, for I am to dance to-morrow too.»

753 Each thing has its *husék* (spirit) or image and it is this
774 image which the disease requires after he has stolen or entered the soul of the man and it is this soul which the medicine-man has gone to get. During the first part of all medical ceremonies, the medicine-man's spirit goes to the disease and asks him which things he wants in return for the sick man's soul.

[124] One of the reasons why the Matako always require payment to let themselves be photographed is that by photographing them one takes their image (spirit) and thus may hurt them. The money they get for the photograph may eventually

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serve to pay the medicine-man in case something happens to them. 753 774

The ceremonial objects whose spirit the disease takes away do not become any weaker, since they may be used directly afterwards.

Even though the disease has been given food, he remains insatiable and wants more. He also wants to take away the things he is offered, that is the reason why the medicine-man is obliged to blow on the objects lest the disease should stick to them. When the disease does not get what he wants, he becomes angry and kills his victim.

The disease, or a bad spirit, introduces into the body of the sick person small sticks, usually objects which will make him feel pain. The medicine-man has to take them away by sucking the aching parts and he blows the patient to get the sicknes out of his body. Before treating a patient a medicine-man adorns himself with feathers in order to look like disease or the demon who caused it. The diseases and the spirits are very fond of these ornaments and enjoy seeing them on those who cure the patient. 753 755

When the malady is not very serious, the patient is treated within his hut for economical reasons. To determine whether or not the patient is to be decorated depends upon the seriousness of his case. The medicine-man and the patient get under the same blanket and the former speaks to the disease. Thus the audience is not too large and the disease is easier to cope with. Sometimes it is satisfied with a quart of alcohol. A sick child is always cured inside the house, except when there is an organized ceremony through which they can profit toward the end. 755

According to the Indians vaccine exerts a powerful action against the disease and he can no longer attack the individuals thus vaccinated. Shots fired at the end of the ceremony puts the disease to flight and prevents him from desiring the gun with which one assistant danced. To keep away sickness it is good to hang the carapace of a *tatu* 751

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of their dreams. My informant, having dreamed that he was planting sugar-cane, intended to grow some.

Through the soul one knows what is going to happen. For instance, if one dreams that he shall be killed, it is likely that he is to die an unnatural death. If he is traveling about and dreams of home it is better to turn back. A man who is away from his wife can talk to her in the evening and she will see him in her dreams. It is the soul which walks about during the night. If one dreams of an algarroba or that he is working in a field, it means that he has still a long time to live. If during the absence of a member of the group someone dies, the absent one will dream about the dead person who appears to him naked. Generally when a traveler returns to his village there is no need to tell him of what has happened during his absence, for he is informed of everything through his dreams which occur when his soul returns to his family. Very often in dreams one sees dead relatives. The soul has gone to the underworld and paid them a visit. Sometimes the dead return by night to the houses of the living who then dream of the departed.

b) *Remedies*

The Indians call a certain fungus *ãxǫ̃tĕut*. According to them it is the excrement of the fox which towards morning transforms itself into a fungus. It is used as a remedy for scalding. A fragment of the plant is toasted, powdered, mixed with fat and the white of an egg and spread on the burned place. The fat and the egg white are desirable but not indispensable ingredients for in a pinch the toasted powder is sufficient. This same plant sometimes obturates the penis of a sick person and prevents him from urinating. If when sucking the sick man the medicine-man gets out a fragment of this plant it most certainly means that the patient will recover. When the extremity of a limb aches it is to be tied at intervals of about half an

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755 [114] In the course of the mission to the Argentinian Chaco of which I was in charge during 1932-1933, I had the opportunity of being present at a certain number of ceremonies for the expulsion of illnesses, or evil spirits.

[753] [774] The Matako /Mataco/ Indians do not seem to be acquainted with any other medicine than magical medicine; that is normal since the illness takes the image of the sick person and not his body.

Among the ceremonies described below, a distinction can be made between those from which the whole village benefits and those from which only a single sick person benefits.

Ceremony for the Expulsion of Illnesses for All the Village

(April 8, 1933).

755 756 783 796 [534] [292] [237] [302] This ceremony took place in the morning in the open air rather far from the houses, and was carried out by all the medicine men /the English term is used/ of the village. They were arranged in a row facing east, and all had a maraca and a bone whistle in their hands. Some of them were carrying bands of rattles, either in the hand, slung over the shoulder, or hooked over the elbows. Some officiants were dressed in red wool ceremonial shirts spangled with rings of shells, and others in war shirts made of caraguata thread. Almost all were wearing red headbands decorated with feathers or hats adorned with ostrich feathers, and most had a bunch of ostrich feathers in the hand. The faces of the principal medicine men were daubed with red and black, and those of the women with red. Facing the row of officiants were planted several arrows, points down, and a lance with the point up. In the course of the ceremony a bunch of ostrich feathers was attached to the top of the lance. When I arrived at the spot, I noticed a young /212/ man crushing ha'tax seeds in a gourd which the medicine men would take later.

/213 cont./

755 2. The medicine men had transformed their "image"
756 (spirit) into isti'n, a bird of prey, in order to go find the illness,
774 but as on this occasion the latter had proved particularly
825 malicious, this first attempt at conciliation had failed, and the men had to transform themselves into mɨsa', earth bees.

Ceremony for the Expulsion of Illness for the Benefit of One Person

(January 24, 1933)

755 In a small neighboring village a man was caught by naLi'le. Toward midnight he was dressed in red and white and
[292] seated in the center of the place for ceremonies; he was given two bells. Facing the sick man three sticks were stuck in the ground; one of them about two meters long was entirely covered with a dark cloth; the other two were 75 to 85 cm. long and had pieces of cloth attached to their upper part, which was topped with tufts of ostrich feathers. The two medicine men, dressed only in belts of ostrich feathers and holding iron rattles in their hands, were at the sick man's side. A little farther away were two assistants (probably members of the sick man's family) and three dancers; all were holding rattles.

[533] The medicine men sang and blew on the sick man, who shook his bells, while the dancers and the assistants stamped in
[535] place, /214/ making their rattles sound. The dancers next began to run around the group in the following manner: they went from left to right while turning their backs to the sticks; arriving level with the latter for the second time, they changed direction and continued in this fashion, alternately making two circles in each direction, while the assistants beat time with their feet and sang, making their rattles jingle, and the medicine men continued to sing and blow. The sick man had remained motionless during this time. After about ten circlings, the dancers

/214 cont./

755 went to rest, smoking and talking with the assistants, but the medicine men did not stop singing and shaking their rattles, the sick man continuing to remain motionless. The dancing was resumed after a quarter of an hour, accompanied this time by the [533] [535] rattles and singing of all the officiants and by the sick person's bells. The participants had a fairly joyful air. The ceremony ended everyone sat down and began to smoke. Then they carried away the sticks and began to take off the ornaments, first those of the medicine men, then those of the assistants and dancers, and lastly those of the sick man, who went quietly to his hut.

Note

[774] [776] naLi'le is a spirit who lives underground and steals the images of men. Sometimes those whom it has taken thus become medicine men.

Ceremony for the Expulsion of Illness
for the Benefit of One Person

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(March 20-24, 1933)

A woman who was seriously ill and very rich was treated by five great medicine men of the region.

[349] In the area around the house where she lived, about five square meters of ground were cleared, wooden posts were erected there, and a kind of tent was erected; one of the posts, of about six meters, was decorated with two large pieces of cloth and an old Argentinian flag. Around the tent were placed the objects demanded by the illness or appropriate to please it: a spread-out mosquito net, a poncho on a weaving loom, an old suitcase, some cloths of loud colors, a saddle, a military coat,